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RNR 151

URGENT*** MIDEAST LEAD MEIR (P R 136)

BY ARYE WALLENSTEIN

TEL AVIV, OCT. 13, REUTER -- ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER MRS. GOLDA MEIR TONIGHT DECLARED THAT IF EITHER SYRIA OR EGYPT WERE PREPARED TO DISCUSS TERMS OF A CEASEFIRE, ISRAEL WOULD NOT LAG BEHIND.

ASKED WHETHER HER COUNTRY WOULD AGREE TO NEGOTIATE A CEASE-FIRE WHILE EGYPTIAN TROOPS WERE STILL EAST OF THE SUEZ CANAL, THE 75-YEAR-OLD PRIME MINISTER TOLD A PACKED PRESS CONFERENCE HERE THAT IF THE ARABS SUGGESTED PEACE TALKS, "WITHIN A FEW MINUTES WE WOULD BE AT THE (CABINET) CONFERENCE TABLE AND MAKING OUR DECISION."

MRS. MEIR SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE SOVIET UNION, SAYING ITS MASSIVE SUPPLY OF WEAPONS TO THE ARABS WAS MOTIVATED BY "CALLOUS" SELF-INTEREST.

SHE WAS ALSO CRITICAL OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE BUT SHE PRAISED THE POSITION TAKEN BY THE UNITED STATES AND WEST GERMANY.

MORE JW/SF 1605

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RNR 154

MIDEAST - LEAD MEIR 2 TEL AVIV

MRS. MEIR APPEALED ONCE AGAIN FOR UNCONDITIONAL NEGOTIATIONS, SAYING THIS WAS THE ONLY WAY TO REACH AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT WHICH WOULD OPEN UP A NEW ERA FOR THE ENTIRE REGION.

"BUT THIS DEPENDS UPON THEM (THE ARAB COUNTRIES)," SHE QUICKLY ADDED.

SHE STATE : "THIS SMALL COUNTRY (ISRAEL) HAS DECIDED TO LIVE AND IF WE HAVE TO PAY THE PRICE, WE HAVE TO PAY IT.

"WE WILL WIN BECAUSE WE MUST LIVE. OUR NEIGHBORS ARE FIGHTING... TO DESTROY US. WE WILL NOT BE DESTROYED."

MRS. MEIR SAID ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS HAD SO FAR FAILED TO SHOW ANY SIGN OF WANTING TO STOP FIGHTING.

WHEN THEY (THE ARABS) COME UP WITH PROPOSALS FOR A CEASE-FIRE WE SHALL CONSIDER THEM VERY SERIOUSLY, SHE ADDED.

ASKED ABOUT THE DANGER OF THE SUPERPOWERS BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE MIDDLE EAST WAR, SHE SAID, "IN THE LAST FEW DAYS 120 PLANES LOADED WITH AMMUNITION, ROCKETS AND WEAPONS HAVE BEEN LANDING IN EGYPT, SYRIA AND IRAQ. THAT'S SOME KIND OF INVOLVEMENT."

MORE JW/SF 1628